A

Modeſt and Peaceable

LETTER

CONCERNING

Comprehenſion, &c.

(B. P.)

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A

LETTER

Concerning

COMPREHENSION.

Good Cousin,

I Am right sorry, that the Parliaments casting out the *Bill of Comprehension* should so much concern you as to put you into such a passion as you expresst against them, and me, at our last nights meeting. Sure the Company you now converse with, and the strange Principles with which they have now possest you, have alter'd your nature, and turn'd your former reason into prejudice, and unbelief; if not, you would have believ'd what I did so seriously affirm to be a known truth: namely, *That this Age is not more severe against the disturbers of the setled Peace and Government of the Church and State, than they were in the very happy days of our Good Queen Elizabeth.* Some of the Reasons why I said so, I do with very much affection tender to your Consideration, and to your

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Cenſure to; and that the laſt may be the more charitable, and you not apt to make the errors or failings of your Governors ſeem more or greater than indeed they are; let me intreat that you remember what I have very often ſaid to you; namely, *That malicious men* (of whom really I do not take you to be one) *are the beſt Accuſers, and the worſt Judges.* And indeed I fear it would prove to be a bitter truth, if ſome had that power which too many labour for in theſe days, in which *Schiſm* and *Sedition* are taken to be no ſins; by men who pretend a tenderneſs of Conſcience in much ſmaller matters.

And that I may keep ſome order, and you be the better ſatisfied in what I intend in this Letter; I earneſtly intreat that you will at your next leiſure read in Mr. *Cambdens* true Hiſtory of the Life and Raign of our Good Queen *Elizabeth*; in which you may find what care was then taken to prevent Schiſm and the ſad confuſion that attends it; and, how the Contrivers of Libels, and diſperſers of them have been ſeverely puniſht, many of them even to death; as namely, *Henry Barrow*, and many of his Sectaries for diſturbing the publick peace of the Nation, by ſcattering abroad their monſterous Opinions; as alſo, for affirming the Church of *England* to be no true Church; and the like. As you may find written by the ſaid Mr. *Cambden* in the thirty-ſixth year of that Good Queens Raign.

But I commend more eſpecially to your Conſideration, the ſtory and ſad death of *Hacket*, and his

his Adherents; as namely, of *Wiginton*, *Arthington*, and *Copinger*, all of one Sect and Brotherhood: But I say I do most seriously commend to your Consideration the beginning and death of the said *Hacket*; who was first but a Schismatick, and stopt not there, but became by degrees so fully possest by the evil spirit, the spirit of pride and opposition, that he publickly revil'd the Queen, the Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury* and the Lord Chancellor; and at last became so infamous an Heretick, that he was condemn'd to death for his errors; at which time he revil'd and curst his Judges; and died blaspheming and reproaching his Creator: This you may read in the Thirty-fourth year of Queen *Elizabeth*, as it is written by honest learned Mr. *Cambden*, who concludes this story of *Hacket* with this observation, *Thus doth the enemy of Mankind bewitch those men whom he seeth are not content to be wise unto sobriety.* These stories I say, and too many like them, you may find in Mr. *Cambd.* Hist. of Q. *Eliz.* and you may find the like in Bishop *Spotswoods* History of the Church of *Scotland*; and also the like in Mr. *Fullers* History of the Church of Great *Brittan*; and you may there find also, what labour hath been used by the discontented Non-conformists to unsettle the Government of the Church, and consequently of the State; and may there also find, how severely many of them have been punisht: So that you need not wonder at what I said last night; nor think these the only times of persecuting men of tender Consciences. And for the better Confirmation of what I now write

write to you, I will refer you to one Testimony more in the time of our peaceful K. *James*, and you may view it, in the second Volum of the Reports of Judg *Crook*, a man very Learned in the Law. But I shall first tell you the occasion of that Report, which was this, The Non-conformists (which are in that Report called by the name of *Puritans*) had given out that the King had an intent to set up or give a Toleration to *Popery*; and they had also compos'd a large Petition complaining of the severity of some usage, and of some Laws that concern'd themselves, and desir'd that the severity of those Laws might be mitigated; and other like desires were in the said petition; to which they had procur'd not less than seven hundred hands, and the close of it was, *That if these desires were not granted, many thousands of his subjects would be discontented:* Which indeed was not a threatning, but was understood to be somewhat like it. This report of his Majesties intent to set up or tolerare *Popery*, begot many fears and discontents in the Nation, and to prevent greater disturbances the King did appoint many of his Privy Council, and all the Judges of the Land, to meet together in the Star-Chamber; in which Assembly the Lord Chancellor declar'd to them the occasion of this their publick Convention; and asked the Judges this following question. (As you may read it in the very same words in the said Learned Judges Reports in the second year of the Raign of King *James*.)

"*Whe-*

"*Whether it were an offence punishable, and what* "*punishment they deserv'd, who framed Petitions* "*and collected a multitude of hands thereto, to prefer* "*to the King in a publick cause as the* Puritans *had* "*done, with an intimation to the King, that if he* "*denyed their Suit, many thousands of his Subjects* "*would be discontented: Whereto all the Judges* "*answered that it was an offence finable at discretion,* "*and very near* Treason *and* Felony *in the punish-* "*ment; for, they tended to the raising sedition, re-* "*bellion and discontent among the People: To which* "*resolution all the Lords agreed. And then many of* "*the Lords declared, That some of the* Puritans *had* "*raised a false rumor of the King, That he intended* "*to grant a Toleration to* Papists: *Which offence the* "*Judges conceiv'd to be hainously finable by the rules* "*of the Common Law, either in the* Kings-Bench, *or* "*by the King and his Council; or now, since the* "*Statute of the Third of* Henry *the Seventh in the* "Star-Chamber. *And the Lords severally declared,* "*How the King was discontented with the said false* "*rumor, and had made but the day before a Protesta-* "*tion to them, that he never intended it; and, that* "*he would spend the last drop of blood in his body,* "*before he would do it; and prayed that before He* "*or any of his Issue should maintain any other Religion* "*than what he truly professed and maintained, That* "*God would take them out of the World.*

This you may find in the Reports of that Learned Judg as it was left amongst many other of his Reports

ports, all exactly written with his own hand; and as they are now publisht by Sir *Harebottle Grimstone* who now is the worthy Master of the *Rolls*. And you may note that the said Reports were publisht in the year 1658, at which time *Oliver* the Tyrant was in his full power; and you may there find that all his Judges allowed these Reports to be made publick, and subscribed their Names to them; and with *Oliver*'s consent doubtless: for, he had found that those very Non-conformists, whose Sedition helpt him into his power, became after a short time as restless and discontent, as they were with their lawful King; and indeed as willing to pull him down, as they had been diligent to set him up.

Dear Cousin! these Places to which I have refer'd you for a Testimony of what I said are not to be doubted; and, though you would not then give any credit to what I assur'd you I knew to be a truth; yet I hope you now will.

And now seriously Sir! let me appeal to your own Conscience, and ask how easily would you have given credit to any stranger, that had brought you news of any error committed by any *Bishop* or their *Chaplins*; or by any of the *Conformable Clergy*, though there were not any reasonable Probability for it. Dear Cousin consider what I say, and consider there is a great stock of *innocent blood* to be answered for; not only the blood of our late *Vertuous King*, and the blood of the *Arch-Bishop* of *Canterbury*, and the Lord *Strafford*, but the blood of many good and innocent Families, that now

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eat the bread of ſorrow, by being impoveriſht and undone; and which is worſe, there is a corruption of the manners of the greateſt part of the Nation to be anſwered for; and all this occaſioned by our late Civil War; and that War, occaſioned by the diſcontented reſtleſs Non-conformiſts; and them only, for till then we knew not the name of *Independent*, or of *Seiker*, or *Quaker*. Couſin, theſe are the ſad effects of the busie bodies; many of whom, God hath ſtill ſo blinded that they cannot yet ſee the errors they have run themſelves and the Nation into; nay, that would imbroile it again into greater ruin rather than not be complyed with in their peeviſh deſires and deſignes. Dear Couſin, I will not ſay all; but indeed, too many of the men with whom you comply and do ſo much magnifie, are too like *Simeon* and *Levi* that were Brethren in this iniquity. And as you love the peace of the Church, in which you were Baptized; and the peace of the Land in which you were born, and live, and enjoy what you have; nay, as you love the peace of your own Soul draw back and let it not enter any more into their Councels or Confederacy; but at laſt take notice that though neither you nor any of your Aſſociates ſcruple at the ſin of *Sedition*, but ruſh into it without Conſideration or fear, even as a Horſe ruſhes into the battel; yet, I pray take notice that St. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Galatians*, reckons it with the deeds of the fleſh, even with *murder* and *Witchcraft*, which you ſo much abhor; and many think *Sedition* a more hainous ſin than they, by reaſon of the more evil and more deſtructive effects of it: for, *murder* may become ſo

by taking away the life of but one ſingle perſon: and *witchcraft* hath its limits and bounds ſet to it, perhaps not to take away the life of any man, but only to do miſchief to a ſingle perſon, or a Family; and muſt end there: But who knows the limits of *Sedition*? or, when the fire is kindled which is intended by ſeditious men, who can, who is able to quench it? And for ſome proof of the miſerable effects of it, though I might give you too many ſad inſtances of them in former times; yet I will only refer you to the late *Long Parliament* now freſh in memory, and the woful effects of that Civil War, begot and maintained by ſeditious diſcontented men.

And for the ſorrow you expreſs for thoſe men of tender Conſciences, that are ſcandalized at wearing a Surplice, kneeling at receiving the Sacrament, the Croſs in Baptiſm and the like; and would have them therefore taken away, that ſo many, ſo learned, and ſo godly Men might by taking them away, be brought to a Conformity and made capable of preaching the Goſpel, which otherwiſe they cannot do, being ſcandalized at theſe Ceremonies. I now ask you what if more men? and more learned men? and more godly men? and as tender conſcioned men ſhall be ſcandalized by their being taken away? What care will you or thoſe of your party take for their tender Conſciences? Nay, I ask again, what if we ſhall forget or neglect the tender Conſciences of our own party, and comply with yours? What ſecurity can you or they give us, that this ſhall ſatisfie them ſo as to ask no more when this is granted? Or that a year hence their Diſciples,

ciples, or their Succeſſors ſhall reſt ſatisfied with what is now granted? Really, I cannot think any ſecurity can be given, but that this being granted, yet any man of a melancholly, or a malicious, or a peeviſh, or a fantaſtical, or a wanton Conſcience; or a Conſcience that inclines to get reputation and Court applauſe, may call his own a tender Conſcience, and become ſeditious and reſtleſs, if his tender Conſcience be not compli'd with.

I ſhall next ſatisfie your deſire, or rather your challenge, why I go ſo conſtantly to the *Church Service*; and my anſwer ſhall be in all love and in ſincerity. I go to adore and worſhip my God who hath made me of nothing, and preſerv'd me from being worſe than nothing. And this I do inwardly in my Soul; and teſtifie it outwardly by my behaviour; as namely, by forbearing to cover my head in that place dedicated to God, and only to his Service; and alſo by ſtanding up at the profeſſion of the Creed, which contains the ſeveral Articles that I and all true Chriſtians profeſs and believe; and alſo by ſtanding up at giving Glory to the Father, the Son, and to the Holy Ghoſt; and confeſſing them to be Three Perſons, and but one God. And (ſecondly) I go to Church to praiſe my God for his many deliverances of me from the many dangers of my Body, and more eſpecially of my Soul in ſending me Redemption by the death of his Son my Saviour; and for the conſtant aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit; a part of which Praiſe I perform frequently in the Pſalmes, which are daily read in the Publick Congregation. And (thirdly) I go to Church publickly to confeſs and bewail my ſins; and to beg pardon

for them, for his merits who died to reconcile me and all Mankind unto God, who is both his and my Father; and for the Words in which I beg this mercy, they be the Letany and Collects of the Church, composed by those learned and devout men whom you and I have trusted to tell us which is, and which is not the written Word of God; and trusted to translate those Scriptures into *English*. And in these Collects you may note, that I pray for pardon of sin, and for grace to believe and serve God absolutely: but for health and peace, and plenty, for all these I pray conditionally, even so far as they may tend to his Glory, and the good of my Soul, and not further: and this confessing my sins, and begging mercy and pardon for them; I do by adoring my God, and by the humble posture of kneeling on my knees before Him: and in this manner, and by reverend sitting to hear some chosen parts of Gods Word read, in the publick Assembly; I spend one hour of the Lords day every forenoon; and half so much time every evening. And since this uniform and devout custom of joining together in Publick Confession and Praise, and Prayer, and adoration of God, and in one manner, hath been neglected; the power of Christianity and humble Piety is so much decayed, that it ought not to be thought on, but with sorrow and lamentation.

And lastly, (for I am tedious beyond my intention) whereas you and your party would have the Bishops and Cathedral-Church-Lands sold to supply the present necessities of the Nation; I say, first God prevent the Nation from such necessities as shall make them guilty

guilty of so many Curses as have been by the Doners of those Lands intail'd with those Lands upon those men, that alienate them to any other use than of those that shall serve at God's Altar; to which end the Priests Portion was kept with Care and Conscience till the dayes of King *Henry* the Eighth, who is noted to make the first breach of those Oaths that were always taken and kept by his Predecessors, and taken by himself too, to preserve the Church-Lands; and it is noted, that he was the first Violator of those many Laws made also to preserve them; out of which Lands he took at the dissolution of the Abbies a part for himself; exchang'd a part with others that thirsted to thrive by the dissolution; and gave the rest to be shar'd amongst the Complying Nobility, and other Families, that then were in greatest power and favour with him; concerning which I refer you to a little Treatise written by the Learned Sir *Henry Spelman*, (called *De non temerandis Ecclesiis*,) and especially to the Preface before it; in which you may find many sad Observations of the said King; and find there also, that more of the Nobility, and those other Families, and their Children that shared in the Church-Lands, came to die by the Sword of Justice, and other eminent misfortunes in twenty years, than had suffered in four hundred years before the dissolution; for a proof of which, he refers you to the Parliament Roles of the twenty-seventh of that King. And to me it seems fit that the Observations of the ruin, and misfortune of the other Families that were sharers of the Church-Lands, made by

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that pious and learned Knight since the said twenty years, are not also made publick; but possibly they may pare too neer the quick, and are therefore yet forborn.

I will say nothing of Queen *Elizabeth*; but for King *James* I will say he did neither follow King *Henry's*, nor her President; and his Childrens Children sit this day upon his Throne. And for his Son, *Charles* the First, who is justly called the *Martyr for the Church*: He had also well considered the Oaths taken by all his Ancestors, and by Himself too at his Coronation; and therefore in his Book of Penitential Meditations and Vows, made in his Solitude and Imprisonment at *Holmby*; you may in that Chapter of the Covenant there find that at that time when he apprehended Himself near to death, yet that this was then his Resolution.

"*The principal end of some men in this Covenant* "*is the abasing of* Episcopacy *into* Presbytery, "*and of robbing the Church of its Lands and Reve-* "*nues; But I thank God as no man lay more open* "*to the sacrilegious temptation of usurping them,* "*(which issuing chiefly from the Crown, are held of* "*it, and can legally revert only to the Crown with* "*my consent) so I have always had such a perfect* "*abhorrence of it in my soul, that I never found* "*the least inclination to such sacrilegious refor-* "*mings; yet no man hath a greater desire to have* "*Bishops and all Church-men so reform'd that they* "*may best deserve and use, not only what the pious*

"*muni-*

"*munificence of my Predeceſſors have given to God*
"*and the Church, but all other additions of Chriſtian*
"*bounty.*

"*But no neceſſity ſhall ever (I hope) drive me*
"*or mine to invade or ſell the Prieſts Lands;*
"*which* Pharaoh's *Divinity and* Joſeph's *true piety*
"*abhorred to do. I had rather live as my Predeceſſor*
"Henry *the Third ſometimes did, on the Churches*
"*Alms than violently to take the Bread out of the*
"*Biſhops and Miniſters mouths.*

"*There are ways enough to repare the breaches*
"*of the ſtate without the ruines of the Church; as I*
"*would be a reſtorer of the one, ſo I would not be an*
"*Oppreſſor of the other under the pretence of*
"*publick debts, the occaſions of contracting them*
"*were bad enough, but ſuch a diſcharging of them*
"*would be much worſe. I pray God neither I nor*
"*mine may be acceſſary of either.*

Sir, I have been longer than I intended; for which I crave your pardon; and I beg of God, that you may at laſt ſee and well conſider the many errors that your indiſcreet zeal hath led you into; and the many miſeries it hath helpt to bring upon others, and that for the remainder of your dayes you may redeem the time paſt, and ſtudy to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs; to this I ſhall encourage you, and to live as unoffenſively to others, and as ſtrictly to your ſelf as you do intend, and by God's grace

grace added to your endeavours, he ſhall make you able; and daily to practiſe an humble peaceable piety, ſo humble and peaceable a piety as may ſtop the mouths of all gain-ſayers; for, ſuch holy and quiet living will bring peace at the laſt. And in this the Almighty give me grace to be like you.

Study to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs,
1 Theſ. 4. 11.

February the 18.
1667.

Your Affectionate Friend,
B. P.

FINIS.